

# Return to Use Initiative 2009 Demonstration Project

## Woolfolk Chemical: Fort Valley, Georgia

**THE SITE:** For more than 80 years, a variety of agricultural pesticides were produced at the Woolfolk Chemical Plant in Fort Valley, Georgia. Over time, chemicals used in the plant's daily operations seeped into the soil and polluted underlying ground water. In 1990, high levels of arsenic and other contaminants led to EPA's listing 31 acres as the Woolfolk Chemical Superfund site on its National Priorities List. To address contamination, EPA divided the site into five operable units (OUs). Subsequent remedial activities at these OUs included installing a ground water treatment plant, capping contaminated materials, excavating and treating contaminated soils and sediments, removing contaminants exceeding cleanup goals, and decontaminating or demolishing contaminated buildings. Contaminated residential properties were purchased, and 22 households were permanently relocated by Canadyne Georgia Corporation, the potentially responsible party at the site. Other residences were found to have contaminated soil in yards around the houses and dust in attics. Soil was excavated from these properties, and attics were decontaminated. A drainage ditch leading away from the former facility was also found to be contaminated. Investigations are underway to characterize the extent of this contamination. Once completed, a remedy will be selected to properly address the problem.

**THE OPPORTUNITY:** Once cleanup was complete, the properties that made up OU2 were redeveloped into the Peach County Public Library and the Troutman House – a tourist information center, and office space for local government agencies. The approximately 18 acres that make up OU3 are located in the heart of downtown Fort Valley. After the successful redevelopment of OU2, community members were anxious to find ways to put the OUs back to use.

**THE BARRIERS:** Moving a Superfund site into reuse can be a complex process. To plan for successful redevelopment at the site EPA and the Woolfolk stakeholders needed to remain engaged throughout the cleanup process. Because the site was located at the center of town residents worried about the impact of the site on their health, their



Cleanup underway at the Woolfolk Chemical site.

**Barrier:** Community concerns about contamination and stigma; communication hurdles among stakeholders regarding remedial process and reuse possibilities

**Solution:** Reuse planning process and ongoing community group meetings



Peach County Public Library on OU2 of the Woolfolk Chemical site.

**Before:** Former industrial site at the heart of downtown

**After:** Reuse is occurring at cleaned up portions of the site and reuse plans are in place at others; reuse options and limitations are well understood by community



Woolfolk Alliance community meeting

economic stability, and the safety of redevelopment. These concerns needed to be addressed. Appropriate reuses for OU3 also needed to be determined. To successfully address these challenges, stakeholders involved at the site needed to establish and maintain effective communication methods.

**THE SOLUTION:** Residents of Fort Valley formed two groups whose purpose was to disseminate site details and progress to the rest of community and plan for the property's reuse. The minority community created the Woolfolk Citizens Response Group (WCRG), a group of concerned citizens who have been meeting now for 12 years. The second group, the Woolfolk Alliance, includes members of

the WCRG, elected officials, state legislative representatives, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, state, and county health department officials, and local business owners. The Alliance meets every other month to discuss the current status of the Woolfolk Site. EPA awarded WCRG a Technical Assistance Grant (TAG), part of which it used to participate more effectively in a community based reuse planning process at the site. During the reuse planning process, land use planners, residents, local government, and EPA collaborated to determine viable future land uses that were in accord with the community's vision and EPA's cleanup goals. The reuse planning process has enabled the community, stakeholders, and the local government to work closely with EPA and voice their concerns and their hopes for the site once the cleanup is complete.

**THE SITE NOW:** Once cleanup is complete at OU3, approximately 11 acres will be available for unrestricted use and five to seven acres will require pavement. The reuse planning team developed three potential mixed-use scenarios for reusing OU3 at the Woolfolk Superfund site. EPA anticipates that the cleanup at OU3 will be complete in 2010, which will open up the possibility of making one of the reuse scenarios a reality at the site. Current plans for site reuse include a new building to provide climatically controlled storage for paper records from several government sources and the library and a new satellite facility building for the Fort Valley State University. What began as an incredibly challenging situation has become a source of pride and accomplishment for the Fort Valley community. In the words of Fort Valley Mayor John Stumbo, "Many of us have been working on this project since the beginning over twelve years ago. By meeting together, sharing our feelings, eating lunch together, being aware of some of the personal and family issues of those attending, we established a community. That relationship is helping us to solve our problems and built trust through what is, in the best of times, a very difficult process. There will be life after Superfund here."

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:** Charles King, Remedial Project Manager, at (404) 562-8931 or [king.charles1@epa.gov](mailto:king.charles1@epa.gov); or Bill Denman, Region 4 Superfund Redevelopment Coordinator, at (404) 562-8939 or [denman.bill@epa.gov](mailto:denman.bill@epa.gov).

Also, access a short video about the site at: <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/programs/recycle/info/aftersf.html>.